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Department of Genetics

February 16, 1959

Dr. William M. Sinton
Lowell Observatory
Flagstaff, Arizona

Dear Dr. Sinton:

A group of microbiologists, including myself, are meeting informally next week to discuss some problems of the biological explorations of the planets. Your observations of the 3.46μ band from Mars are of course uniquely important for our discussion. I would be grateful to you for reprints for your publications on planetary surfaces and for any further comment you might care to make on the significance of this finding.

May I also ask your advice on a possible related point? We are concerned with the danger of contamination of the planetary surface by material that might be carried along with any probe. For this reason it would be desirable to extract as much information as possible by means of a circum-planetary satellite before programming a landing. Can you suggest how much more information might be obtained by the application of your methods from such a device operated, say, as an earth satellite, or as a Martian satellite? That is, would you feel that enough additional information over that presently available could be obtained from satellites to warrant interpolating these experiments in the program prior to landing.

To take a related topic, do you believe that your methods might furnish more decisive information on the incidence of gaseous and organic material on the surface of the moon in the light of Koryzef's recent claims with respect to volcanic activity there?

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

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